

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7180

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 2235

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS* PFOR, PINT, NU

SUBJECT: ODUBER MAKES SURPRISE VISIT TO MANAGUA

REF MANAGUA 2082

SUMMARY: COSTA RICAN PRESIDENT ODUBER SPOKE TO PRESIDENT SOMOZA FOR THREE HOURS IN MANAGUA ON JUNE 5. SOMOZA SAYS THEY SPOKE IN THE MAIN OF COSTA RICAN DOMESTIC PROBLEMS WHICH SOMOZA RELATED TO A BILATERAL UNDERSTANDING ON POLITICAL ASYLUM POLICY.

1. COSTA RICAN PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER PAID AN UNEXPECTED VISIT TO NICARAGUA JUNE 5 AND SPENT THREE HOURS CHATTING WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA BEFORE DEBARKING FOR HONDURAS. THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY ANNOUNCED THAT THE TWO SPOKE ABOUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS SCHEDULED FOR COSTA RICA.

2. ODUBER'S PRESENCE IN NICARAGUA COINCIDED WITH THE BUBBLING CONTROVERSY CONCERNING COSTA RICA'S LESS THAN GENEROUS
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TREATMENT OF NICARAGUAN POLITICAL ASYLEES (REFTEL). ON

THE SAME DAY AS ODUBER'S VISIT, FOR EXAMPLE, AN EDITORIAL IN THE MILDLY OPPOSITIONIST EL CENTROAMERICANO SCORED ODUBER AND FOREIGN MINISTER FACIO FOR TURNING THEIR BACKS ON COSTA RICA'S DEMOCRATIC HERITAGE AS WELL AS ON THE VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON ASYLUM FOR THE SAKE OF SHORT-TERM POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY. BUT COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR ENRIQUE CARMONA, THE CENTER OF THE RECENT STORM, EMPHATICALLY DENIED TO THE MEDIA THAT THE MATTER WAS DISCUSSED BY SOMOZA AND ODUBER.

3. PRESIDENT SOMOZA TOLD THE AMBASSADOR SHORTLY AFTER THE VISIT THAT ODUBER HAD DWELT AT GREAT LENGTH ON THE COSTA RICAN INTERNAL SITUATION. ACCORDING TO SOMOZA, ODUBER RELATED THAT SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS IN COSTA RICA NEEDED PERFECTION, BUT THAT THERE WERE ENTRENCHED INTERESTS WHICH WERE PREVENTING HIM FOR CARRYING OUT HIS PLANS. HE AVERRED THAT THE POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM IN COSTA RICA WAS AN ANACHRONISM AND THAT ITS CONGRESS COULD NOT FUNCTION WELL ENOUGH TO BRING ABOUT THE NECESSARY REFORMS. FOR HIS PART, SOMOZA CLAIMED HE CAUTIONED ODUBER ON HIS OVERLY NATIONALISTIC APPROACH, ARGUING THAT IT WOULD SCARE OFF FOREIGN INVESTMENT JUST WHEN IT WAS MOST NEEDED.

4. ASKED ABOUT THE ASYLUM ISSUE, SOMOZA ADMITTED THAT ALTHOUGH THERE EXISTED NO FORMAL BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON THIS ISSUE, HE AND ODUBER HAD REACHED AN "UNDERSTANDING". HE SAID THAT REQUESTS FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM OF EITHER COUNTRY'S EMBASSY WOULD NOT BE GRANTED LIGHTLY AND WOULD BE SUBJECTED TO A RULE OF ALMOST IRONCLAD LEGITIMACY OR NECESSITY. QUERIED ABOUT THE MOTIVE FOR THE UNDERSTANDING, SOMOZA, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING HIS OWN PROBLEM WITH FSLN PERSONNEL ON THE RUN, ALSO ALLUDED TO COSTA RICA'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTED THAT ODUBER WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE NICARAGUAN EMBASSY IN SAN JOSE BECOMING A HAVEN FOR RIGHT-WING DISSIDENTS.

5. COMMENT: WHILE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE HEARD THERE IS APPREHENSION THAT THE NICARAGUAN EMBASSY IN SAN JOSE MIGHT BE USED AS A REFUGE BY ANTIGOVERNMENT ACTIVISTS, SOMOZA'S READING THAT ODUBER HAD INTERNAL REASONS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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WANTING THE ASYLUM AGREEMENT IS NOT SURPRISING. NICARAGUAN OPPOSITON LEADERS, LIKE PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO, WHO HAVE ENJOYED COSTA RICAN HOSPITALITY IN THE PAST, HAVE DEDUCED THAT BECAUSE OF HIS DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, ODUBER IS BENDING OVER BACKWARDS TO PLACATE SOMOZA, PRESUMABLY TO NEUTRALIZE HIM AS A FACTOR IN COSTA RICAN ANTIGOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES. WHATEVER THE REASON, COSTA RICAN PRESTIGE WITH ITS TRADITIONAL FRIENDS

HERE, I.E. THE ANTI-SOMOCISTAS, HAS TAKEN A BIG DIP IN
RECENT DAYS.
SHELTON

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